

# how to quit smoking

## **Know about nicotine withdrawal:**

Nicotine is a drug that enters the bloodstream within seconds of using tobacco. It activates the pleasure centers in the brain. When the brain doesn't have nicotine, you start feeling restless and irritable. It's like you're being punished for not smoking. More nicotine relieves these feelings - like being rewarded for smoking.

Nicotine also activates learning centers in the brain, so as the body learns to crave nicotine, the brain comes to think that smoking is somehow very important and valuable. Many people go through a kind of grieving process when they quit. They can miss cigarettes like a dear old friend. This is a chemical effect of addiction - and it's temporary.

As you know, nicotine doesn't last very long (that's why you want one cigarette after another). When you stop smoking, nicotine is cleared by your liver and kidneys within 48-72 hours, and your body starts to repair itself. Most people have withdrawal symptoms: headaches, sour stomach, insomnia, tiredness, and aches and pains. People also feel mood swings, loneliness, restlessness, anger, self-pity, and just general crankiness.

After one week, your senses of taste and smell are better. You can breathe easier, and don't cough as much. Some people start to forget about cigarettes after two weeks. For others it can take 2 or 3 months. But eventually, when your brain is no longer artificially stimulated by nicotine, and smoking isn't part of your routine anymore, you simply forget about it.

You should be aware that about half of people experience a temporary worsening of withdrawal symptoms after 4-6 weeks. This is when many people give up, thinking they are helpless to overcome this addiction. It's not true! If you are prepared for this problem, you will just get through it with the coping strategies you have planned (see below). Like all withdrawal issues, these "late symptoms" are temporary.

Also be aware that each individual craving for nicotine actually lasts less than three minutes. They seem longer!

## **Know how you smoke:**

Know your reasons for quitting. Write them down. Save the list, because you'll need it later. Here are reasons that have been important to some people:

*Feel healthy and strong*  
*Smell good (hair, clothes, house)*  
*Look good (younger skin, whiter teeth)*  
*Kid's health (fewer colds and ear infections)*  
*Kids won't want to smoke*

*Save A LOT of money*  
*Won't have to leave activities/restaurants to smoke*  
*Won't worry about carrying cigarettes with me*  
*Better for the environment - less pollution*  
*Not supporting tobacco companies or animal testing*

Know your triggers: the things that make you want to smoke - for example, drinking coffee, wine, or beer; talking on the phone; driving long distances; being with other smokers; playing cards or pool; feeling lonely, feeling stressed.

Know your "favorite cigarette": first thing in morning, after a meal, after sex, end of the night, taking a break at work... Be ready for these situations, and plan ahead to do something else when they arise.

## **Have a plan:**

**1. Set a date:** For example, a birthday (your own, your spouse's, parent's, child's), anniversary, a holiday. Mark a calendar for what dates you will reach the 3-day mark (toxins from smoke are out of your system), the 2-week mark (worst of the cravings pass), the 4-6 week zone (symptoms can temporarily get worse), and the 3-month mark (you start to feel like you are really, truly recovered).

**2. Tell others.** Tell them they can probably expect your mood to change for the next month, but it's temporary.

**3. Get ready:** Get rid of your cigarettes, personal lighters or matches; wash and pack away all ashtrays. Remove the lighter from your car, and wash your car ashtray, if it was used for cigarettes.

**On your quit day,** plan to take time to make things clean and fresh at work, in your car, and at home. Wash your clothes. Vacuum your car. Buy yourself new shampoo and other body products, air fresheners, and fresh flowers or flowering houseplants: you'll enjoy their scent over the next two weeks, as your sense of smell recovers. Start a "money jar." Put your cigarette money aside. Plan to buy yourself or your loved one/s a treat.

**For the first two weeks,** keep busy.

- Stay away from activities where you used to smoke (party, tavern, watching tv, etc), but do lots of other activities (go to the mall, gym, library, bookstore, church, bike ride, etc.).
- Keep your hands busy: carry a water bottle with you, and sip water when you feel a craving
- Keep your mouth busy: chew on a flavored toothpick, coffee stirrer, or drinking straw. Keep a supply on hand. Don't replace cigarettes with snacks (sunflower seeds, lemon drops, etc), which contribute to weight gain.

**In the first month**, get your teeth cleaned, to get rid of the smoking stains. Consider a facial or a manicure, too.

**During the first three months**, be prepared for renewed cravings. Here are some ways to distract your brain:

Wash your hands and face

Wash some dishes

Take a quick shower

Brush your teeth (even at work)

Refill your water bottle and sip cold water

Take a short walk in the fresh air

Do a few brief exercises - for example, the children's game, "Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes."

### **Have a "plan B":**

You might slip up and have a cigarette in the first three months after quitting. This does not mean you have failed and are a smoker again! But you need to be strong. If you bought a pack, throw it away and don't look back.

1. Review your personal reasons for quitting - find your list and re-read it. (See next page for even more reasons.)
2. What was the trigger that made you smoke again? What strategies will you use, for dealing with this trigger?
3. When times get tough, your mind can play tricks on you. See last page for how to re-orient "smoky thinking."

### **Enlist a partner:**

It can help a lot to have a "coach," a support group, or just a sympathetic ear to call when times are tough.

- Live instant-messaging support: <http://bit.ly/4jIBSS> [English only, Monday through Friday, 11 am - 2 am].
- Free "quit coaches" help with craving and stress management at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669), daily 5 am to midnight.
- Here is an online video explaining what to expect from the 1-800-QUIT-NOW service: <http://bit.ly/3aDrX>
- Spanish quitline: 1-877-2NO-FUME (1-877-266-3863), daily 5 am to midnight.
- Free phone support from the National Cancer Institute: 1-877-448-7848 [English and Spanish, Monday through Friday, 11 am - 11 pm]. Website: <http://bit.ly/4jIBSS>
- For the Oregon state government's free quit-smoking resources, see <http://bit.ly/9BnLtW>
- Smokeless tobacco users: Oregon has a specialized program to help, at <http://mylastdip.com>
- "Become an Ex" is a free national program to support quitting. See <http://www.becomeanex.org>.
- Peacehealth Riverbend (Eugene, Oregon) has a \$60 quit-smoking program that includes an individualized plan (with help from a dietician, exercise counselor, respiratory therapist, and pharmacist), individualized phone support, and weekly classes. Call (541) 222-7442 for details. Website: <http://bit.ly/a4oPrm>

### **Chemical help:**

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT): These can help reduce severe cravings and make it easier to finally quit nicotine entirely. You won't see the full benefits of recovery, however, until you are done using these aids. They are cheaper than cigarettes, though! See <http://bit.ly/960GKm> for "Myths and Facts about NRT."

- Nicotine gum or inhaler (over the counter) can be used as needed.
- Nicotine patch: To make these more affordable, you can buy the highest-powered patch (21 mg, equal to one pack per day) and cut it into smaller and smaller pieces. Consider taking the patch off at night - getting nicotine in your brain all night can cause strange dreams.

Bupropion pills (Wellbutrin, Zyban): This medication reduces cravings and improves mood, without causing weight gain. If you are interested, plan to use it daily for three months, never "as needed."

Varenicline (Chantix): I do not usually prescribe this, unless you have been able to use it without any problems in the past. It has a high rate of side effects, and there is evidence it is not as effective as the manufacturer says it is.

### **Alternative help:**

Acupuncture: Many acupuncturists have treatment programs for quitting, and cost about the same as cigarettes would. See for example: <http://bit.ly/cEgiA2>, a \$50, 5-treatment nicotine-detox program.

St. Johnswort: This herbal medicine for depression and "winter blues" can help you quit smoking as well. Use 2 droppersful tincture, in water, twice a day for two months. Like all medicines, watch out for allergic reactions.

Lobelia: I do NOT recommend using this herb in tea, tincture, or herbal smoking mixtures. It is similar to Chantix (varenicline), and likewise has a high rate of unpleasant side effects. There are better alternatives.

Homeopathy: Homeopathic medicines are nontoxic and do not have the same side effects as whole herbs. Typical remedies used are Tabacum, Lobelia, Plantago and Nux Vomica, starting at a low dose (6x), as needed. For best results and a personalized plan, consult a certified homeopathic practitioner or naturopathic physician.

Hypnosis and self-hypnosis: Mind over matter! Consider using a workbook like "Self-Hypnosis For Dummies" or "Self-Hypnosis For a Better Life." You can order these from your local booksellers or online, or ask your public library to find them for you. Hypnotherapists are listed online - call and see if their services might work for you.

*If you have health insurance, call your agent and ask what quit-smoking programs or assistance they might cover.*

## **Re-orient your life:**

1. Plan to start exercising. For the next three months, walk outside several times every day, and work out every other day. Consider spending your cigarette money on a YMCA (gym/pool/classes) or other gym membership or fitness class. If you have physical limitations to exercise, please see <http://bit.ly/bnSLDu> for a specialized "Fitness Pyramid" that will help.
2. Plan to detox for a month. Your liver and kidneys need to recover from their own nicotine issues. Cut down severely on alcohol and caffeine. Consider using an herbal tonic such as burdock, yellow dock, dandelion or oregon grape root (a simple water infusion, 1/2 cup twice a day). See <http://bit.ly/bYeiJS> for how to make your own.
3. Support your nutrition. For the first month, plan to eliminate fast foods, fried foods, chips, cookies, and other high-fat treats. During this time, concentrate on proteins, sour flavors, and spices - Asian and Indian foods are ideal, with plenty of turmeric, cayenne, green tea and ginger. Drink citrus or cranberry juice or lemonade daily (not soda!).
4. Take your vitamins. For at least three months, plan to take a daily multivitamin with minerals, including iron and magnesium, and also supplement 1000 units vitamin D twice daily. (Most multivitamins only contain 400 units - read the label and do the math.) Consider extra vitamin C (250 mg, twice a day) for a few weeks as well.
5. Anti-inflammatory, anti-oxidant lifestyle, to minimize wear and tear while your body heals:
  - Consider taking fish oil (omega-3 EPA/DHA), about 1000 mg, twice a day. (Avoid fish *liver* oil, due to risk of excessive Vitamin A buildup. Vegan substitute: algae oil.)
  - Use olive oil or canola oil (mono-unsaturated) for cooking and dressings.
  - Eat a handful of tree nuts daily (almonds, pecans, walnuts, etc. - not peanuts, and not more than a handful).
  - If you want a sweet treat, consider dark chocolate (not milk chocolate) that is more than 60% cocoa solids - one ounce at a time, just a few times a week. (Example: a palmful of semisweet chips.)
  - You can drink a glass of red wine daily (not white wine, not beer or liquor, and not more than one glass).
  - If you are over 50, consider taking a baby aspirin daily (81 mg only - more is *not* better!).
  - Exercise daily (see above).
  - Meditate, do guided visualization, or pray, for about 20 minutes, at least once every day. Although you may feel distracted at first, after about ten days it will start helping immeasurably with stress and anger management. Join a group or class that will help you, if you have trouble remembering to do this.

from **97 Reasons** (<http://www.health.com/health/condition-article/0,,20210803,00.html>):

1. *You won't have to pay more and more and more and more each year.*
7. You'll sleep better. Smokers are four times as likely to report feeling unrested after a night's sleep. Going through nicotine withdrawal each night contributes to sleep disturbances.
  10. *Nonsmokers have stronger bones than smokers. Women smokers have been found to lose 2.3% to 3.3% of bone mineral density for every 10 pack-years of tobacco use.*
22. You'll be less likely to burn down your house. One study found that people who live in smoking households were up to 6.6 times more likely to experience a fire injury. According to another study, cigarettes were the cause of 55% of all house fires involving a fatality. Overall, cigarettes are the leading cause of death from residential fires.
  29. *You'll be less wrinkly. After 10 years, smoking can speed up your skin's aging by narrowing blood vessels.*
30. Cut the risk of acid reflux. If you've smoked for 20 years, you're 70% more likely than a nonsmoker to have acid reflux.
  31. *Carry a smaller purse or streamline your pants. No more toting that pack (or two) of cigarettes, lighter, breath strips, and gum.*
38. Reduce the need for premature hairpieces. Men who smoke are twice as likely to become bald.
  41. *Protect Fido and Fluffy. Secondhand smoke at home may be associated with oral cancer and lymphoma in cats, lung and nasal cancer in dogs, and lung cancer in birds.*
50. Be nagged less.
  61. *Experience menopause as scheduled, not before. Smoking may advance the arrival of menopause in women.*
62. Men who smoke have a lower sperm count and motility & increased abnormalities in sperm shape & function.
  63. *Cut down on your cadmium, arsenic, N-nitrosamines, and formaldehyde. Cigarette smoke contains some 4,000 chemical agents.*
69. Crash your car less often. In a 1990 study published in the Canadian Journal of Public Health, smokers had a 1.5-fold increase in risk for motor vehicle crashes over nonsmokers.
  72. *Stop being a horrible influence on children. Children of smokers are twice as likely to smoke.*
82. Be warmer in the winter. No more standing in the snow outside bars and restaurants.
  84. *Hold on to your marbles longer. A 2007 Dutch study of 7,000 people published in the journal Neurology concluded that current smoking increases the risk of dementia. Past smoking doesn't.*

## dealing with smoky thinking

*It can be easy to lose sight of the benefits of quitting when a strong craving for a cigarette hits. If you are giving yourself a reason to smoke, you are probably experiencing an attack of smoky thinking. Fight your smoky thinking with a clear-thinking response using this list.*

- Smoky Thinking*      *I just need one cigarette to take the edge off these cravings.*  
*Clear Thinking*      Cravings become weaker and less frequent with every day that I don't smoke. Even just one puff will feed the cravings and make them stronger.
- Smoky Thinking*      *It's been a long day. I deserve a cigarette.*  
*Clear Thinking*      I deserve a reward after a long day, but there are better rewards than a cigarette. A favorite meal, a funny movie, or a hot shower will help me relax without ruining my quit attempt.
- Smoky Thinking*      *The urge to smoke is just too strong. I can't stand it.*  
*Clear Thinking*      Even the strongest cravings last less than 3 minutes. The urge will go away whether I smoke or not, and smoking now will just make it even harder for me to quit later. I can find something else to do - anything - until the craving goes away.
- Smoky Thinking*      *I blew it. I smoked a cigarette. I might as well go ahead and finish the pack.*  
*Clear Thinking*      I am still learning how to be a non-smoker. It's normal to make some mistakes. But I don't have to smoke that next cigarette. I can learn from this mistake and keep going.
- Smoky Thinking*      *I can't deal with never being able to have another cigarette for the rest of my life.*  
*Clear Thinking*      I only have to deal with today. Quitting happens one day at a time, sometimes one hour at a time! The future will take care of itself.
- Smoky Thinking*      *I am too grumpy without my cigarettes. I am doing my friends and family a favor by smoking.*  
*Clear Thinking*      My friends and family love me and understand that quitting smoking now is the best gift I can give them. Grumpy or not, I am not doing them any favors by continuing to smoke.
- Smoky Thinking*      *I am doing really well. Just one cigarette won't hurt.*  
*Clear Thinking*      I have never smoked just one before. One cigarette always leads to another. I don't want to undo all my progress by smoking a cigarette now.
- Smoky Thinking*      *It's too hard to quit smoking. I can't do this.*  
*Clear Thinking*      Quitting and staying away from cigarettes is hard, but it's not impossible. About 40,000,000 Americans have quit smoking. If other people can do it, so can I. It is too important to give up on.
- Smoky Thinking*      *I've been smoking for so long; quitting won't make a difference now.*  
*Clear Thinking*      No matter how long I've been smoking, my body will benefit from quitting. The healing process starts right away, and before long I will start to feel healthier and look better.
- Smoky Thinking*      *I know people who smoked their whole lives and never got sick.*  
*Clear Thinking*      It's true that some people get lucky. But there is no way of knowing whether I will be one of the lucky ones, and I am not willing to risk my life. The only safe choice is to quit smoking now.
- Smoky Thinking*      *I have already cut down to a safe level.*  
*Clear Thinking*      There is no safe level of smoking. Smoking less is a good first step, but there are many more benefits when I don't smoke at all. Plus, every cigarette that I smoke feeds the habit and makes it that much harder to quit.

from <http://www.smokefree.gov/topic-benefits-smoky.aspx>